

Education Governance Responses
Jamaica Meeting (3/7/07) - Jamaica Village School

31 Attendees (facilitated by George Appenzeller)

Question #1: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the present education governance system in your community?:

Advantages

Local boards represent local people
Accountability
Budget decisions are made closer to the wallet
Local control/culture of the school
Hire teachers/administrators by local boards
Availability of school board members
Local control – community commitment
The Community Uniqueness - . “the heart of the community”; curriculum can be suited to the town
Accountability and Accessibility of board members

Disadvantages

Many different visions
Disparity in funding
Hard finding a superintendent that is a good fit with each individual town
Tuition rates for secondary for some schools
Redundancy of purchasing, policies
Large boards – a lot of meetings super spread thin
Act 60/68
Boards can micromanage
Increased Overhead – Admin costs; sped costs

Question #2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the school district model suggested by Commissioner Cate in his White Paper?

Advantages

More uniform curriculum over time
Easier model to follow
More centralized role for superintendent
Less board members
Super tend to governance
Cost savings – purchases, transportation
School Choice (some) – elementary
Consensus was not reached

Disadvantages

Unrelated boundaries
More questions than answers
Threatens value of life in individual towns
No clue how budgets developed/voted on

Voter participation – how
Loss of local control
Small schools spend less
Loss of local control....fear of moving toward state mandated curriculum; fear of admin/teacher movement
Weighted vote-smaller towns will lose their voice
Loss of school board accountability

Debrief Comments:

Why not start with the children and work our way up instead of a top down model
Make Education Commissioner an elected position
New idea: Based on State D.O.E. stats-we suggest large, medium and extra large schools reduce their spending* by \$1,000 per eq.pupil to achieve spending at small (<100 E.P) school level

- advantage=approx 95,000 students x 1,000 cut
- 1 equal 95 million dollar savings
- 2 music, art, technology classes in small schools
- Disadvantage –excessive spending by large schools would have to be cut.
- Examples: Astro turf in Brattleboro
- \$90,000 for Athletic trainer in Bennington
- \$50,000 sign for Bennington School

* per pupil spending by school type VT DOE Website

New idea: Governance is not broken – funding is broken

Ideas: Vouchers
Magnet schools
Federal gov't to pay for federal mandates
Leave the system alone and fix the funding
Comfortable with known governance
Uncomfortable with unknown because of questions
Community feel, accountability is good now
Need to know it will really save money and improve student outcomes
I wonder how all this information will be distributed to all of Vermont
The big issue is funding
Remove complexity from funding
Understand how money is spent
Education guidelines and regulations with contradictions to funding issues
What do we gain by shifting control from small communities to large communities
Keep small communities
Let's focus on cost drivers – health care, special ed, transportation, state and federal mandates, contracts
Can have economics of scale without changing governance
Nobody thinking about anything except hierarchies - think about students – start from bottom up
Would like to see Commissioner Cate at all meetings – especially smaller schools – The plan is threatening to smaller communities so the conversation may be uncomfortable
Need answers to funding – will towns with choice lose their choice
Look at geography including mountains and roads
Transportation issues over time

Plan says nothing about closing and consolidation

What about issue of private schools

What is a basic education and what should it cost?

Would like to see models of basic education

Let Vermont determine the basic education not National (NCLB)

Why do I as a small school board member feel this is a done deal?